

Florio can render 'poisson', for example, by 'poison'), they are not Montaigne. He *must* be read in French.

Pasquier may have reproached him to his face with his Gasconisms; the seventeenth-century Balzac may have regretted that Montaigne did not come after Malherbe had swept and garnished the French tongue. We cannot share their regrets. Perhaps with the milk of his peasant foster-mother Montaigne sucked in some of the energy of that popular speech which, like his own, gains so much force and frankness from calling things by their blunt names; to the preciousness of the literary he preferred the male language of les halles de Paris', just as we find him centuries ahead of his rime in appreciating popular poetry like the *villanelles* of Gascony. He will be nothing if not natural: 'Si avons nous beau monter sur des eschasses; car sur des eschasses, encores fault-il marcher de nos iambes; et au plus esleve throsne du monde, si ne sommes nous assis que sur nostre cul.' Such in their laughing bluntness are almost his final words to us, in the closing paragraph of his last book. He would rather lack even delicacy than force; as when he speaks of les estroicts baisers de la ieunesse, savoureux, gloutons, et gluants'. But it is seldom indeed that he fails to combine them both. Like a man of the people, again, he has whole queues of epithets standing ready at his disposal. It is, I

think, a possible principle of style, not more
riddled with
exceptions than such principles at best must
be, that ad-
jectives are best either very numerous or
very few. The
manner of the typical eighteenth-century
poet where
every noun tends to be monogamously
married, though
seldom happily, with a single epithet serves
only to illus-
trate Voltaire's remark about the adjective
being the
noun's worst enemy, even though it does
agree with it in
number and gender. But there is an
exhilaration in